

Career Profile: Carpenter/Joiner

Name: Ben Hornberger

Company: BENJAMIN CONSTRUCTION LTD

What first led to you considering a career in building conservation?

After training as a carpenter in new build construction I was offered a role working on a grade I listed Queen Ann manor house. When I accepted the job I did not realize the vast difference in modern and historic construction methods and found the high quality of craftsmanship to better suit the direction I wanted my career to go in.

What initial qualifications did you gain before starting your career?

Level 2 and 3 City & Guilds site carpentry

Did you then undertake further qualifications?

I did a week long course in traditional timber framing.

William Morris Craft Fellowship 2015

Did you do any volunteering or work experience before gaining a paid role? If yes, how did this help you in establishing your career?

Although I did not have to do voluntary work to get a paid position, later on through my career I volunteered at the SPAB working party and with the SPAB Maintenance Co-operative Project. Although spare time these days is very scarce I still volunteer with these events and other craft demonstration days.

What was the most challenging moment on your career path and how did you overcome this?

During 2010/11 work was very hard to get as a self employed carpenter due to the recession, though I was very lucky and was never out of work for more than a few weeks.

What advice would you give to someone who perhaps does not have the means to pursue a postgraduate qualification but wants to enter the heritage field in some capacity?

Invest in some basic hand tools and a van. send letters and make phone calls to conservation building contractors and learn on site. The best place to learn about these buildings is not in a class room but by spending every day with talented crafts people and professionals onsite.

What was the most useful piece of advice you were given when starting on your career path?

Keep getting qualifications, work hard, ask lots of questions, keep a note book and always sketch the building you are working on.

Outside of your talent and knowledge as a craftsperson, what other skills have you found it necessary to develop in order to further your career?

Accounting/ Business management

What would your advice be to a young person wondering if a career as a craftsman would be right for them?

Give it a go. It can be hard work (not always in a warm office) but the rewards of standing back at the end of the day and seeing what a difference you have made to a building makes up for the days spent in the cold.